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Claim Amendments

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for treating sphincter deficiencies for injecting a bulking agent into a tissue plane between an esophagus, rectum, or urethra and surrounding sphincter muscle comprising  
a syringe containing a bulking agent; and  
a hypodermic needle having, ~~wherein said hypodermic needle is comprised of~~ a linear segment extending from a hub of the syringe and an arcuate segment formed by ~~about a 5-45~~ degree bend located within a position of the needle closest to a needle tip, the needle being configured to deliver bulking agent into a tissue plane between an esophagus, rectum or urethra, and a surrounding sphincter muscle.
2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein ~~said hypodermic needle has an~~ the arcuate segment is formed by about a 15 degree bend.
3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hypodermic needle has a length of about 1.5 to 60 inches.
4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hypodermic needle has a length of about 1.5 to 5 inches.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said hypodermic needle is sufficiently rigid so as to maintain the arcuate segment while retaining a minimal amount of flexure to allow proper insertion of the needle into tissue.
6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein a penetration depth shield is located on the linear segment of the hypodermic needle and limits tissue penetration of the needle.
- 7-11 (Cancelled).
12. (Currently Amended) A needle kit for treating stress urinary incontinence, comprising:  
a syringe adapted to contain a bulking agent;

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a hypodermic needle, ~~wherein said hypodermic needle is comprised of~~ comprising a linear segment adapted to extending from a hub of the syringe and an arcuate segment formed by about a 15 degree bend located within a portion of the needle closest to a tip of the needle; ~~a penetration depth shield;~~ and an injectable bulking agent.

13. (Original) The kit of claim 12, wherein said bulking agent is comprised of a plurality of discrete carbon coated particles in a carrier.

14. (Currently Amended) The kit of claim ~~12~~ 13, wherein said carbon coated particles ~~are of rounded shape and~~ have an average transverse cross-sectional dimension of between ~~200 and 500~~ 100 and 1000 microns.

15. (New) The kit of claim 12 wherein the needle has a length of about 1.5 to about 5 inches.

16. (New) The kit of claim 12 further comprising a penetration depth shield.

17. (New) An apparatus for delivering a bulking agent from a syringe to a tissue plane between an esophagus, rectum or urethra, and a surrounding sphincter muscle, the instrument comprising:

a syringe adapted to house a bulking agent; and

a needle connected to and extending between about 1.5 and about 5 inches from the syringe, the needle including a linear segment and an arcuate segment located adjacent to the linear segment closest to a tip of the needle, the arcuate segment including about a 15 degree bend.

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